

Message Text

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO AMEMBASSY SAN JOSE IMMEDIATE

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 255809

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, CS

SUBJECT: FACIO REQUEST ON MID-EAST

REF: LANE/SULLIVAN TELECON OF 11/19

1. PER FACIO REQUEST FOR STATE OF PLAY ON MID-EAST, DEPT. STATEMENTS FOLLOW ON LATEST ROUND OF RUMORS REGARDING BUILDUP ON GOLAN HEIGHTS. AS FAR AS WE KNOW, THERE HAVE BEEN NO MORE RECENT DEVELOPMENTS OF CONSEQUENCE, AND DEPT. ASSESSMENT OF SITUATION STATED HEREIN REMAINS CURRENT. THERE IS NO SECURITY COUNCIL SESSION IMMINENT, ALTHOUGH SECURITY COUNCIL MUST MEET BEFORE NOVEMBER 30 TO DECIDE UPON EXTENSION OF UN PEACE-KEEPING FORCE ON GOLAN HEIGHTS BEYOND NOVEMBER 30.

2. DURING NOVEMBER 15 PRESS CONFERENCE, SECRETARY KISSINGER ANSWERED THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS ON RUMORS OF IMM- INENT HOSTILTIES IN THE MIDDLE EAST.

BEGIN QUOTE:

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QUESTION: MR. SECRETARY, WITH RESPECT TO THE DIFFICULTIES

THAT MAY ARISE, BEFORE YOU GET INTO THE QUESTIONS ON THE TRIP, I WOULD LIKE TO ASK WHAT YOUR ASSESSMENT IS OF THE

POSSIBILITY OF AN OUTBREAK OF WARFARE IN THE MIDDLE EAST NOW, IN VIEW OF A SPATE OF REPORTS YESTERDAY AND TODAY FROM THE AREA ABOUT POSSIBLE PREEMPTIVE ISRAELI ATTACKS, THE UNLOADING OF HUGE AMOUNTS OF SOVIET ARMAMENTS IN SYRIA, THE VISITS TO THE GOLAN HEIGHTS AND THAT. COULD YOU GIVE US YOUR OPINION?

SECRETARY KISSINGER: OBVIOUSLY, WE HAVE SEEN THESE REPORTS, AND WE ARE CHECKING INTO THEM ON AN URGENT BASIS. WE CANNOT BELIEVE THAT ANY OF THE PARTIES IN THE MIDDLE EAST WOULD RESORT TO WAR UNDER THESE CIRCUMSTANCES.

WE CANNOT BELIEVE THAT ANY MAJOR POWER WOULD DELIBERATELY ENCOURAGE WAR IN A SITUATION AS SERIOUS AND AS POTENTIALLY EXPLOSIVE AS THAT IN THE MIDDLE EAST. THE UNITED STATES WOULD CERTAINLY OPPOSE ANY IDEA THAT THE PROBLEMS OF THE MIDDLE EAST CAN BE SOLVED BY MILITARY ACTION AND WILL USE ITS INFLUENCE WITH ALL PARTIES TO PREVENT THIS FROM ARISING. IT EXPECTS THAT ALL OTHER COUNTRIES THAT ARE IN A POSITION TO DO WO WOULD EXERCISE A SIMILAR RESTRAINING INFLUENCE.

SO, WE THINK THAT THESE REPORTS ARE PROBABLY - IF THEY ARE NOT EXAGGERATED AS TO THE FACTS, WE DO NOT BELIEVE THAT MILITARY ACTIONS ARE IMMINENT.

QUESTION: I ASSUME YOU MIGHT MEAN THE SOVIET UNION. I WOULD LIKE TO ASK WHETHER YOU HAVE ANY INFORMATION OR EVIDENCE TO INDICATE THAT THE SOVIET UNION MIGHT BE ENCOURAGING WAR?

SECRETARY KISSINGER: WE HAVE NO EVIDENCE THAT THE SOVIET UNION IS ENCOURAGING WAR, AND, AS I HAVE SAID, WE ARE USING ALL OUR INFLUENCE WITH BOTH PARTIES AND WE ARE CERTAINLY CALLING TO THE ATTENTION OF ALL OTHER COUNTRIES THE IMPORTANCE OF RESTRAINT IN THE MIDDLE EAST.

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QUESTION: IS THE SOVIET UNION USING ITS INFLUENCE IN A POSITIVE DIRECTION IN YOUR OPINION, SIR?

SECRETARY KISSINGER: THIS RECENT FLARE-UP HAS ONLY COME TO OUR ATTENTION IN THE LAST FEW HOURS, AND IT ISN'T CLEAR TO US YET WHAT IT MEANS. I WOULD WARN AGAINST OVER EXAGGERATING THE IMMINENCE OF ANY CONFLICT THERE. BUT WE ARE CERTAINLY CALLING IT TO THE ATTENTION OF THE SOVIET UNION.

QUESTION: MR. SECRETARY, COULD YOU GIVE US A MORE

THOROUGH VIEW OF YOUR CURRENT APPRAISAL OF THE MIDDLE EAST SITUATION AS THE PRESIDENT AND YOU ARE ABOUT TO DEPART FOR A CONSIDERABLE PERIOD OF TIME? DO YOU HAVE ANY SPECIAL ANXIETY THAT THERE WILL BE A HIATUS HERE DURING THIS PERIOD WHEN WE ARE NOW AT A STAGE OF SEEING CONSIDERABLE REPORTS OF IMMINENT ACTION? WHAT IS YOUR BASIC VIEW OF THE HAZARD HERE?

SECRETARY KISSINGER: THE PRESIDENT AND I MET WITH SECRETARY SCHLESINGER THIS MORNING, AND WE REVIEWED CONTINGENCIES WHICH MIGHT ARISE AND MECHANISMS OF HOW TO DEAL WITH THEM IF THEY SHOULD ARISE. I REPEAT, THIS IS A NORMAL PRECAUTION. WE DO NOT EXPECT THE CONTINGENCIES TO ARISE. WE DO NOT BELIEVE THAT PRIOR TO A MEETING BETWEEN THE GENERAL SECRETARY AND THE PRESIDENT THE SOVIET UNION WOULD BE ENCOURAGING MILITARY ACTION IN THE MIDDLE EAST, AND WE CANNOT BELIEVE THAT ANY OF THE PARTIES IN THE MIDDLE EAST WOULD BE SO RECKLESS AS TO ENGAGE IN MILITARY ACTION.

SO, WHILE WE RECOGNIZE THAT CERTAIN MILITARY PRECAUTIONS HAVE BEEN TAKEN BY BOTH SIDES AND WHILE THERE IS ALWAYS A RISK THAT PRECAUTIONS COULD GET OUT HAND, WE DO NOT THINK A WAR IS LIKELY. IF IT SHOULD OCCUR, WE HAVE MADE CONTINGENCY PLANS FOR DEALING WITH IT. COMMUNICATIONS ARE, OF COURSE, VERY RAPID AND WE WOULD DEAL WITH IT ON THAT BASIS.

QUESTION: MR. SECRETARY, HAS THE SYRIAN GOVERNMENT
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INDICATED TO YOU, AS FAR AS YOU KNOW, ITS ATTITUDE TOWARD AN EXTENSION OF THE UN PRESENCE ON THE GOLAN HEIGHTS AND WHETHER IT HAS OR HASN'T, HOW MUCH OF ANY IMPORTANCE DO YOU ATTACH TO ITS ATTITUDE TOWARD THAT QUESTION THAT WILL SOON BE COMING UP?

SECRETARY KISSINGER: THE SYRIAN GOVERNMENT HAS NOT GIVEN US A FORMAL ANSWER AS TO THE EXTENSION OF UNDOF ON THE GOLAN HEIGHTS, AND TO THE BEST OF MY KNOWLEDGE, I DO NOT BELIEVE THAT THEY HAVE GIVEN A FORMAL ANSWER TO ANYBODY. THEY HAVE, HOWEVER, INDICATED ON A NUMBER OF OCCASIONS GRAVE DOUBTS ABOUT THE EXTENSION OF UNDOF AND IF ONE WERE TO QUOTE THE STATEMENTS THAT THEY HAVE MADE, ONE COULD CONSTRUE THEM AS AN INDICATION THAT THEY PROBABLY WILL NOT AGREE TO THE EXTENSION.

IT IS OUR VIEW THAT FAILURE TO EXTEND UNDOF WOULD CAST DOUBTS ON THE VIABILITY OF AGREEMENTS THAT MAY BE MADE

IN THAT AREA, AND WE THEREFORE BELIEVE THAT THE EXTENSION OF UNDOF IS IMPORTANT FOR THE CONTINUATION OF THE NEGOTIATING PROCESS AND ESPECIALLY FOR NEGOTIATING PROSPECTS THAT MAY EXIST BETWEEN SYRIA AND ISRAEL AND THE FAILURE TO EXTEND IT WOULD UNDOUBTEDLY CONTRIBUTE TO THE TENSION IN THE AREA.

END QUOTE.

3. AT NOVEMBER 18 NOON BRIEFING, STATE DEPARTMENT SPOKESMAN WAS ASKED THE FOLLOWING:

BEGIN QUOTE:

QUESTION: HOW DO YOU VIEW THE PRESENT SITUATION IN THE MIDDLE EAST? IS THE TENSION VERY HIGH, OR HAS IT BEEN LOWERED?

ANSWER: I THINK BOTH SIDES THAT SEEM TO BE MOST DIRECTLY INVOLVED -- BOTH SIDES HAVE SPOKEN TO IT PUBLICLY AND HAVE SAID THAT THEY WERE NOT GOING TO ATTACK. AND I THINK I'LL JUST LET THE MATTER REST THERE AT THE MOMENT.

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END QUOTE. INGERSOLL

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